

# TallahasseeVoices

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## North Florida Power Project Referendum

11-09-2005

\*TallahasseeVoices is a pro bono Internet survey panel sponsored by Kerr & Downs Research and The Tallahassee Democrat. There were 881 responses to the survey sent out on November 3, 2005. Panel results have been weighted to reflect the demographics of Leon County and results are representative of all local residents who have access to the Internet at home, work, or school.

# Coal Will Win – Maybe!

## *TallahasseeVoices* Internet Survey, 11.10.2005

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With a week remaining in the referendum balloting period, local voters support the City of Tallahassee's participation in the power consortium planning to build a coal-fired power plant in Taylor County by a 53% to 47% margin.

But hold on before calling this election. Undecided voters are more likely to lean toward rejecting the partnership. Plus, surveying on the coal plant issue has an eerie similarity to polling on consolidation. Surveys on consolidation over the past 25 years consistently showed support for consolidation, yet the issue never passed. Emotional arguments against consolidation always won out over rational support on voting day.

Six in ten TallahasseeVoices panelists (61%) say they have received their mail ballots, and only 34% claim they have already cast their vote.

# Those Opposed say:

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- Coal opponents mount several emotional arguments against the plant including environmental and health concerns. 85% of opponents claim the plant will be harmful to the environment. Two out of three opponents (68%) claim the coal-fired plant will create numerous health problems. The number one reason for opposing the coal plant is a belief that Tallahassee should focus on creating alternative, renewable resources. Of course, this result begs the question of the economic viability and availability of sufficient supplies of renewable resources to meet this area's energy needs.

# Those in Favor say:

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- Supporters of the coal fired plant are left with rational arguments such as “It’s going to be built anyway, we should at least have a say in its running,” (chosen by 78% of supporters) and “If Tallahassee does not become a partner in the project, the coal burning plant will be built anyway” (chosen by 69% of supporters). Only 15% of supporters offer the following as justification for their vote: “There is no proof that coal burning plants like this one contribute to higher levels of medical problems.”

# Commission Ducks the Issue?

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Three in ten voters believe the City Commission ducked the coal issue by calling for a referendum. Nearly 4 in 10 voters, however, maintain that the City Commission is putting power in the hands of voters where it belongs. In a broader context, voters believe they, rather than City Commissioners, should decide a series of critical issues including:

- Whether or not to replace TalTran with a private company that would build a more comprehensive mass transit system for this area
- Whether or not to increase local sales taxes to fund a range of transportation projects such as widening Capital Circle
- Whether or not to force developers to include a certain percentage of low-income housing in each housing development
- Whether or not to participate in an energy consortium with other governments and private companies

# Confusing Ballot Language

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Opponents and proponents of the coal-fired plant skirmished about ballot language before the final language was selected:

*If a majority of the City Commission determines that the North Florida Power Project coal burning plant will be built in Taylor County, regardless of the City's participation, then shall the City of Tallahassee be allowed to partner in, and derive power from the plant?*

Three in ten voters think this ballot language is confusing and the results of the referendum should be discarded.

# Confusing Ballot Language con't

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8 out of 10 voters agree that the following language is simpler and more straightforward and should have been used on the ballot:

*Do you support or oppose the City of Tallahassee's participation in the coal burning plant to be built in Taylor County?*

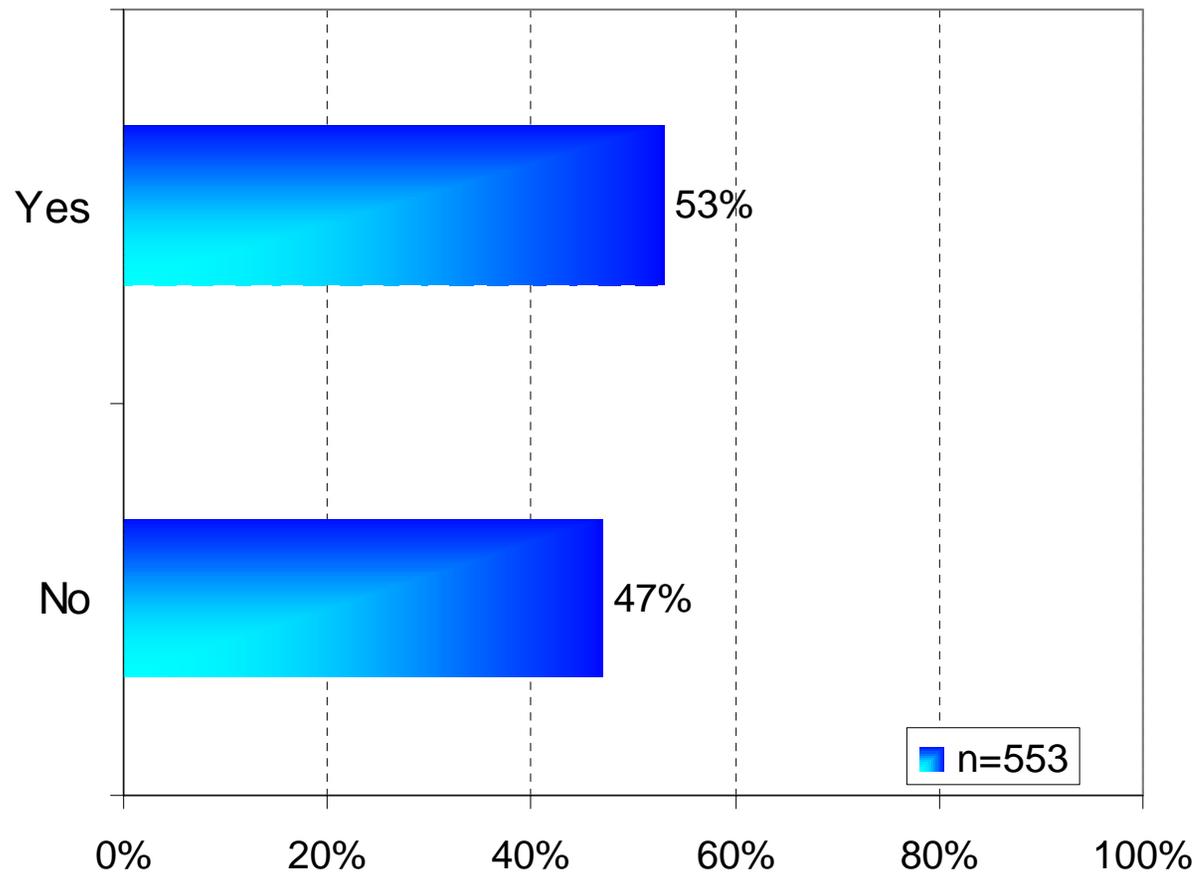
*These finding suggests that ballot language should be tested on ordinary citizens rather than being crafted by politicians and government staff.*

# Turnout

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Who sends in their ballots will impact the results. Over 80% of Republicans favor the City's participation in the coal plant, while only 44% of Democrats favor participation. Males support the coal plant (66%), while women do not (47% in favor). Education and income are correlated with support as higher income households (66% support) and individuals with graduate work or degrees (63% support) are more likely to support the coal plant. African American support (54%) and white support (55%) for the coal plant are nearly identical. Support among all other ethnicities falls below 40%.

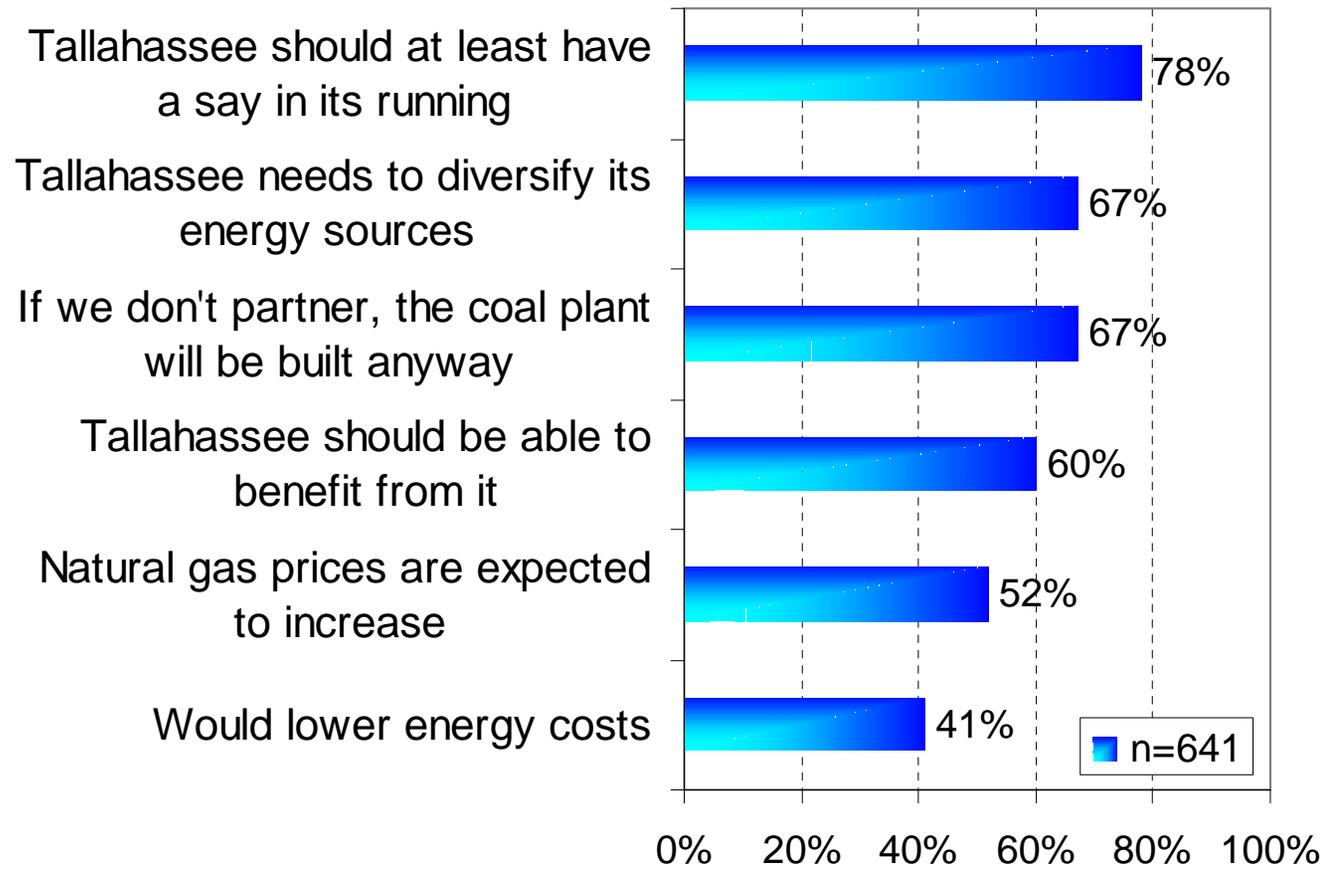
***“If a majority of the City Commission determines that the North Florida Power Project coal burning power plant will be built in Taylor County, regardless of the City's participation, then shall the City of Tallahassee be allowed to partner in, and derive power from the plant?” \****



\*This graph contains the responses of those voters that have voted, are going to vote, and of how those who are undecided about voting are leaning.

# Reasons why voters Favor referendum\*

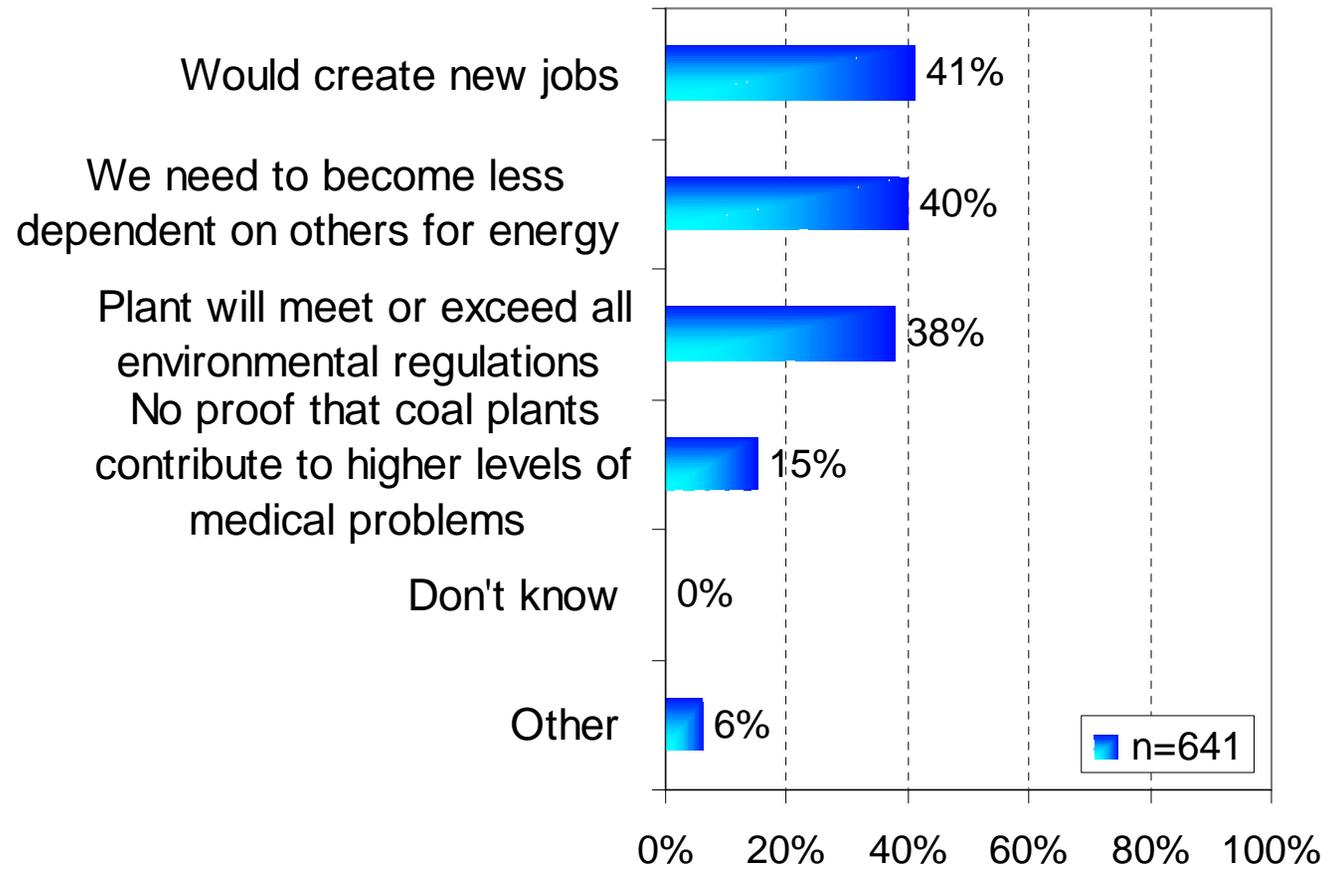
## Top Responses



\*Based on those respondents who favored the referendum

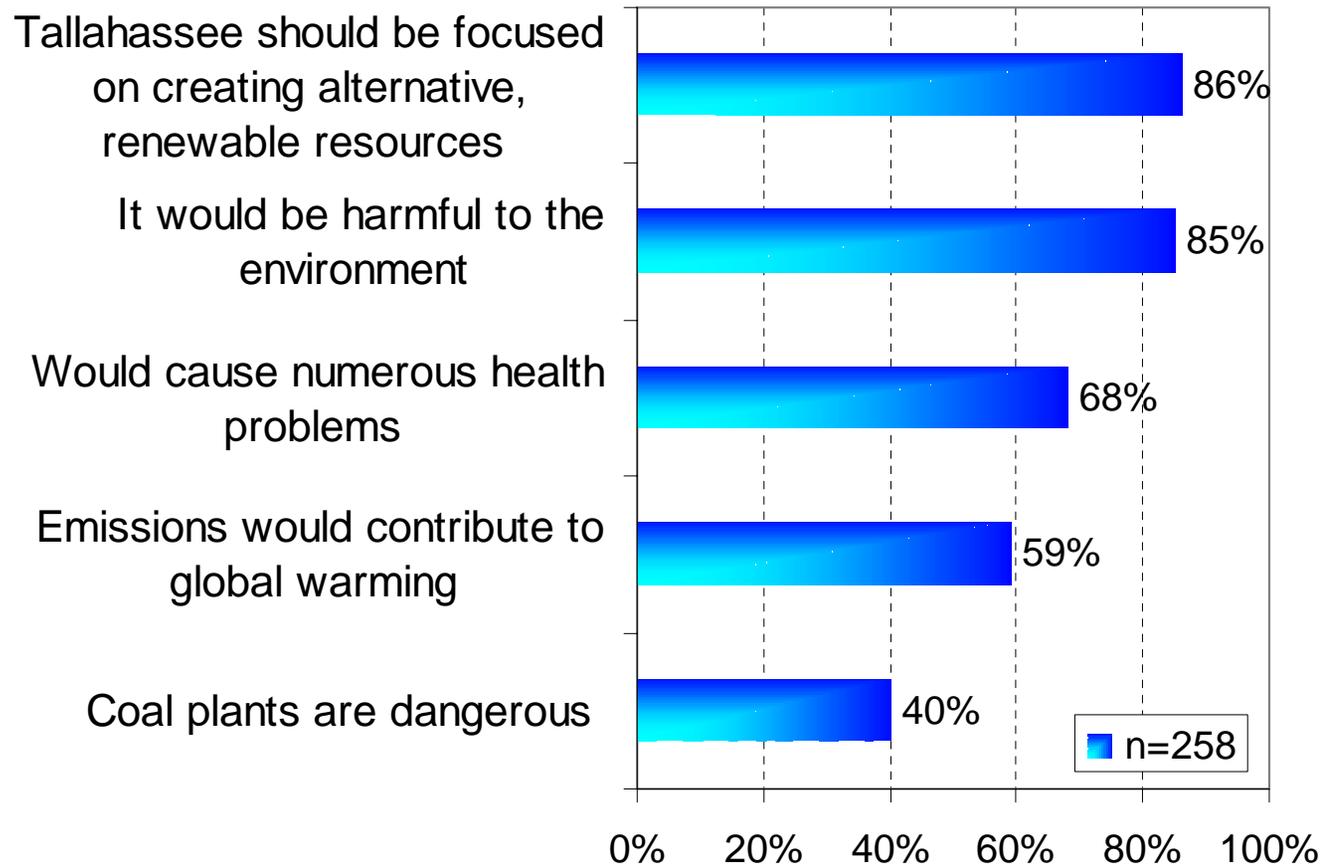
# Reasons why voters Favor referendum

## Other Responses



# Reasons why voters Oppose referendum\*

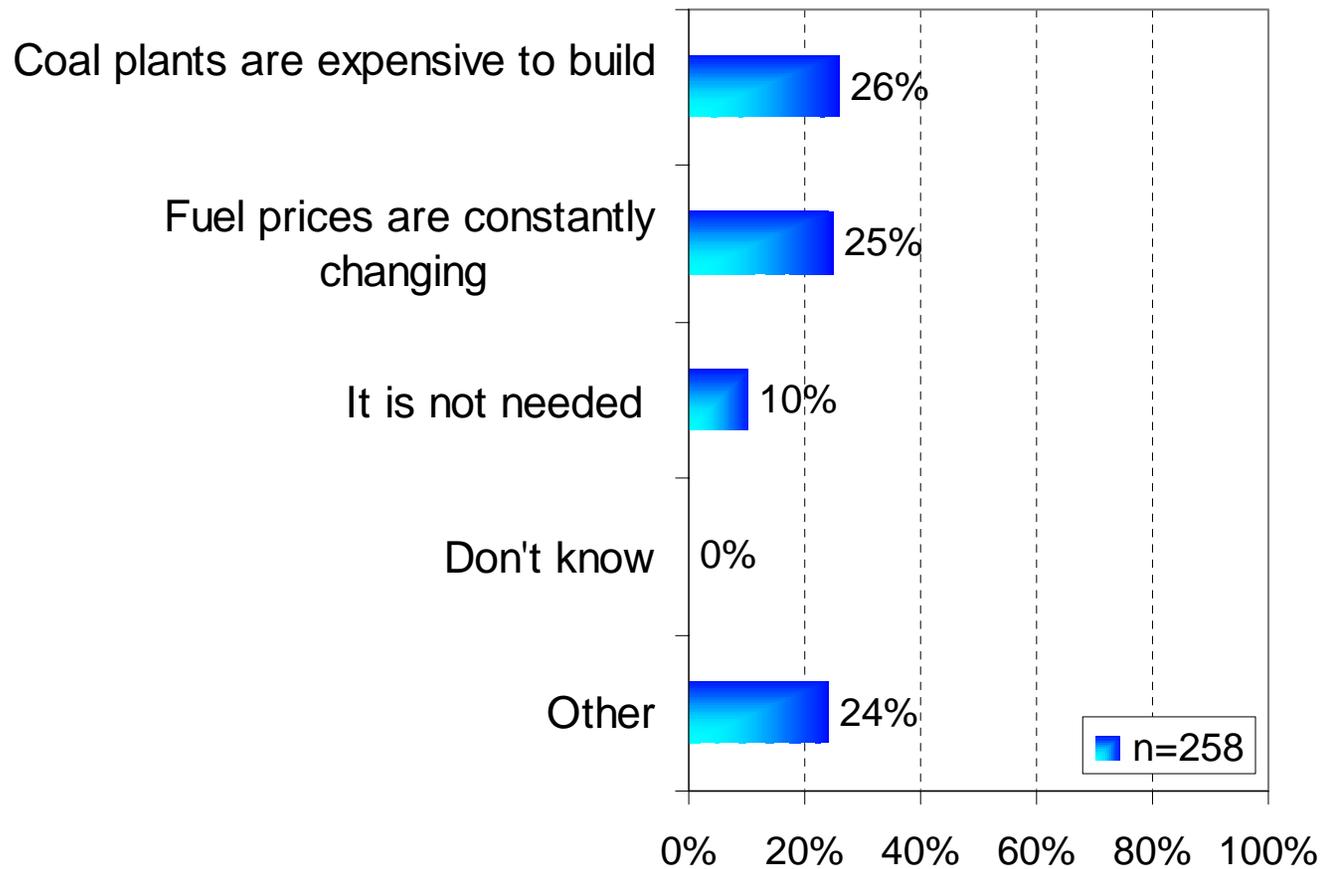
## Top Reasons



\*Based on those respondents who opposed the referendum

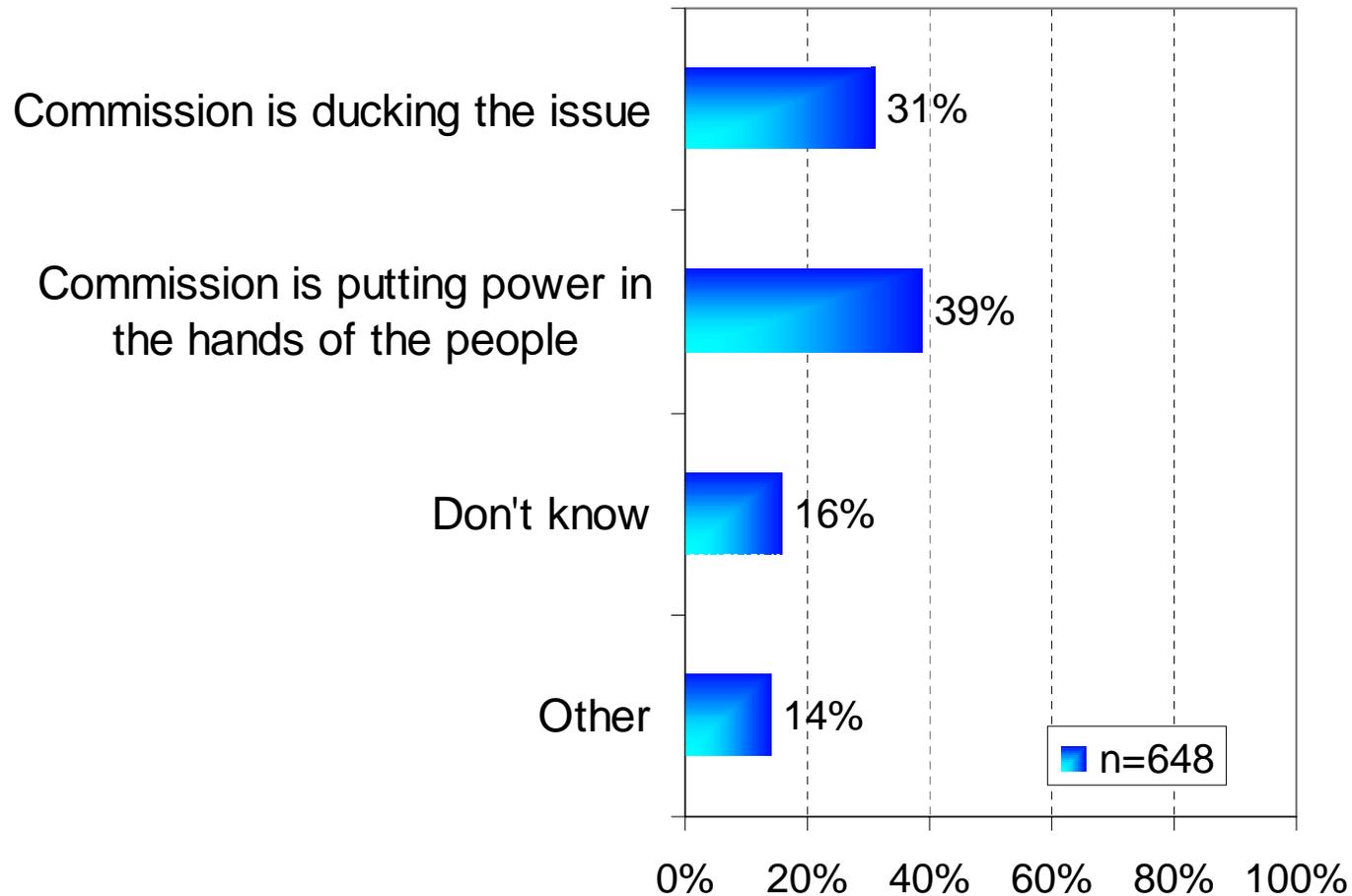
# Reasons why voters Oppose referendum

## Other Responses



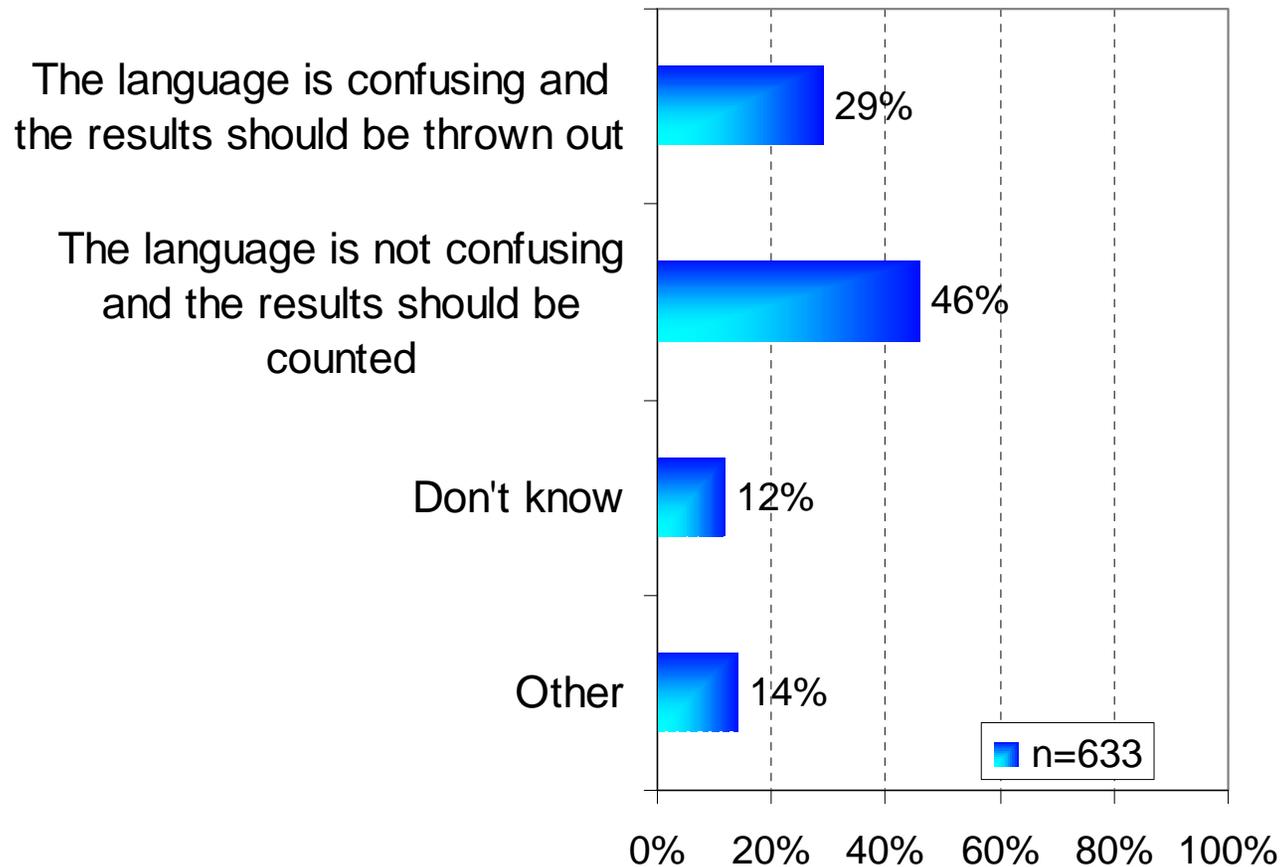
# Why was this referendum called by the City Commission?\*

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\*Some people say the City Commission called for a referendum in order to duck this issue because it is so politically sensitive. Other people say the City Commission is putting power into the hands of citizens where it belongs. What do you think?

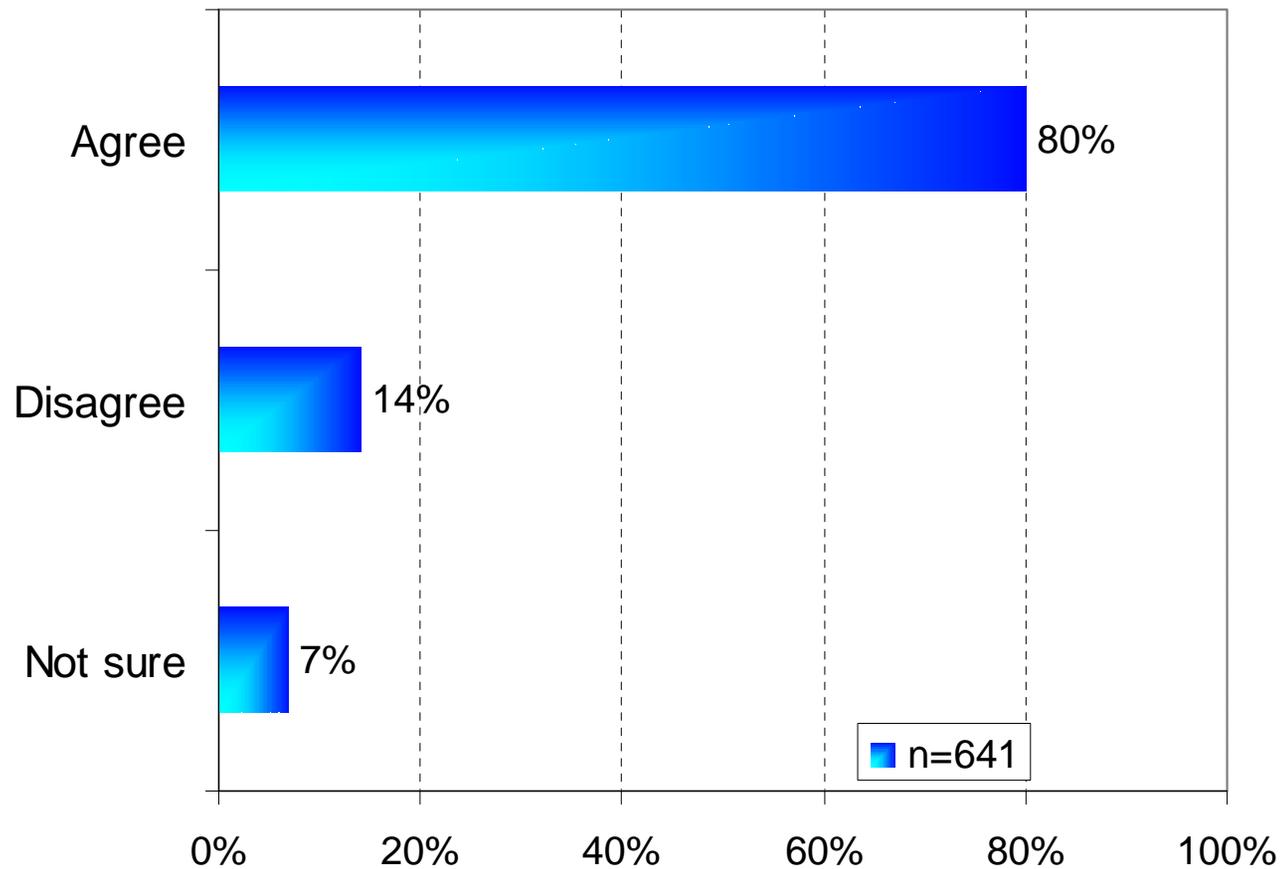
# Wording of referendum is\*:



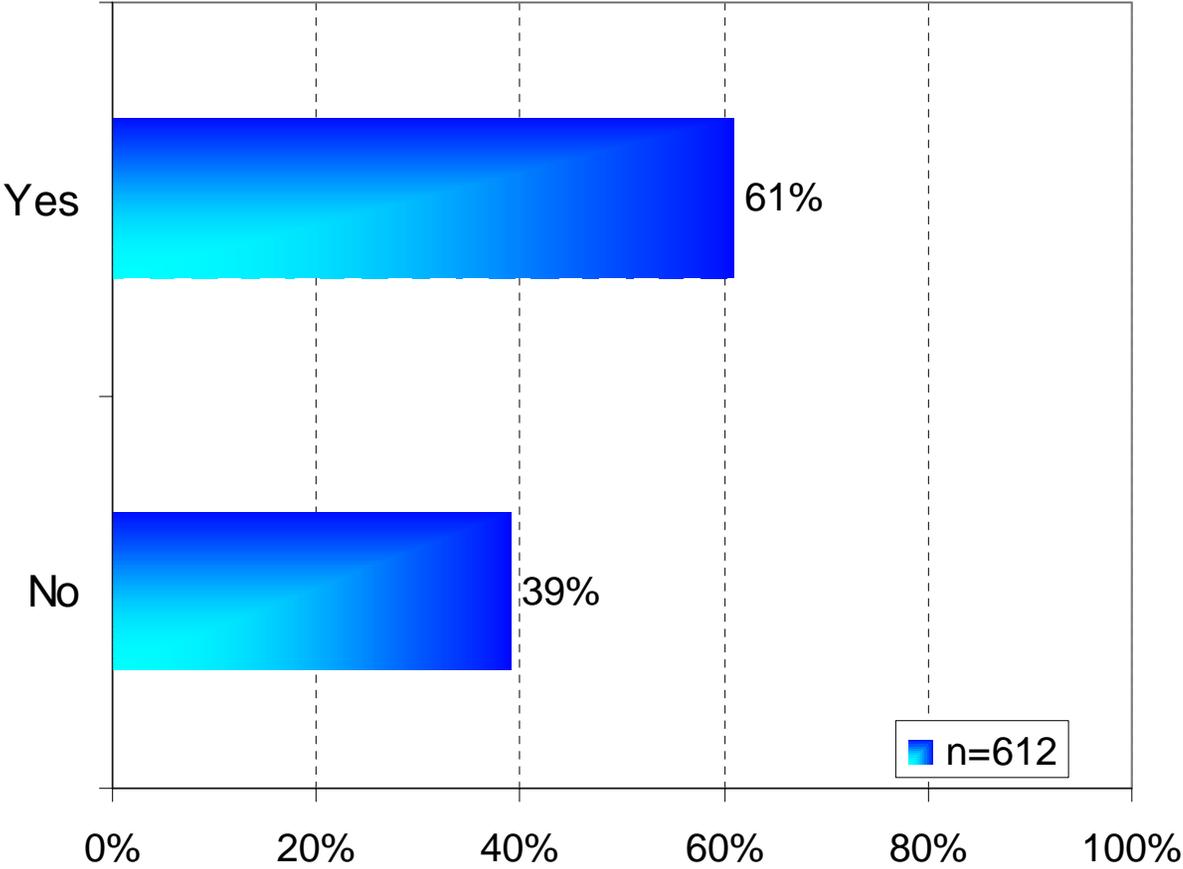
\*Some people say the wording of the referendum makes it seem as if the City of Tallahassee will determine whether or not the coal burning power plant is built in Taylor County, and that no matter how the referendum vote turns out, the results should be thrown out because of confusion over ballot language. Other people say the language is straightforward and is not confusing at all. What do you think?

# Referendum language should have been worded as:

*“Do you support or oppose the City of Tallahassee's participation in the coal burning power plant to be built in Taylor County?”*

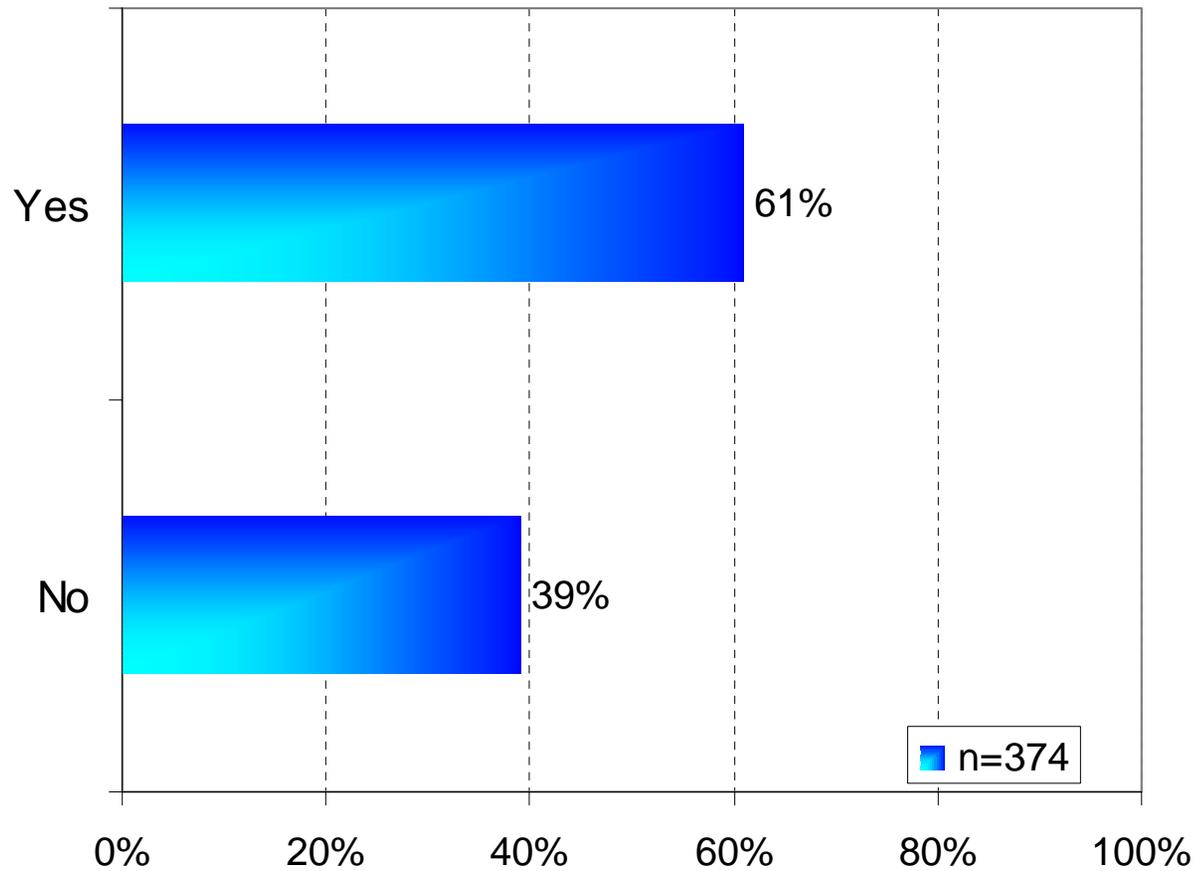


# Those registered voters that have received their ballots for the Coal burning plant planned for Taylor County



# Have you voted on the referendum to have Tallahassee participate in the North Florida Power Project's coal plant planned for Taylor County?\*

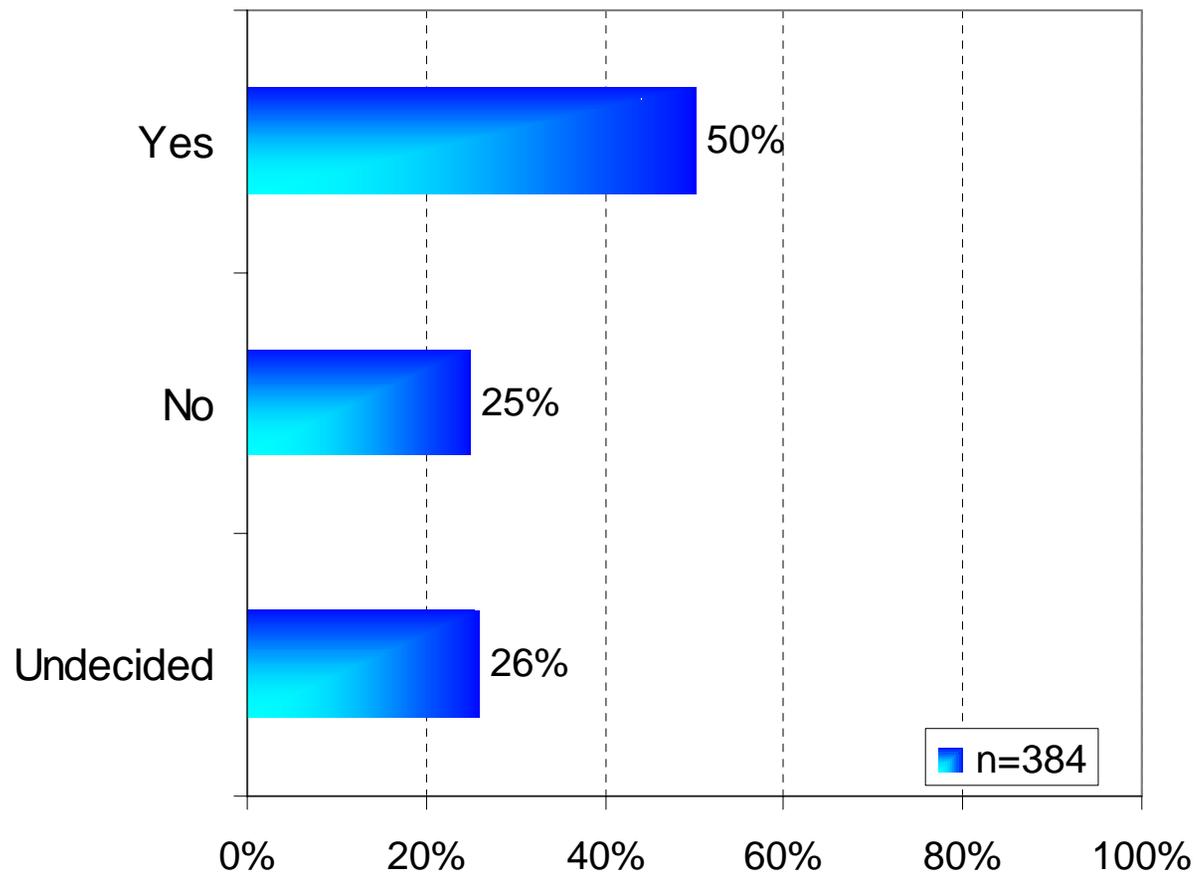
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\*Based on those voters that have received their ballots.

# Are you going to vote on Tallahassee's participation in the North Florida Power Project's coal plant planned for Taylor County?\*

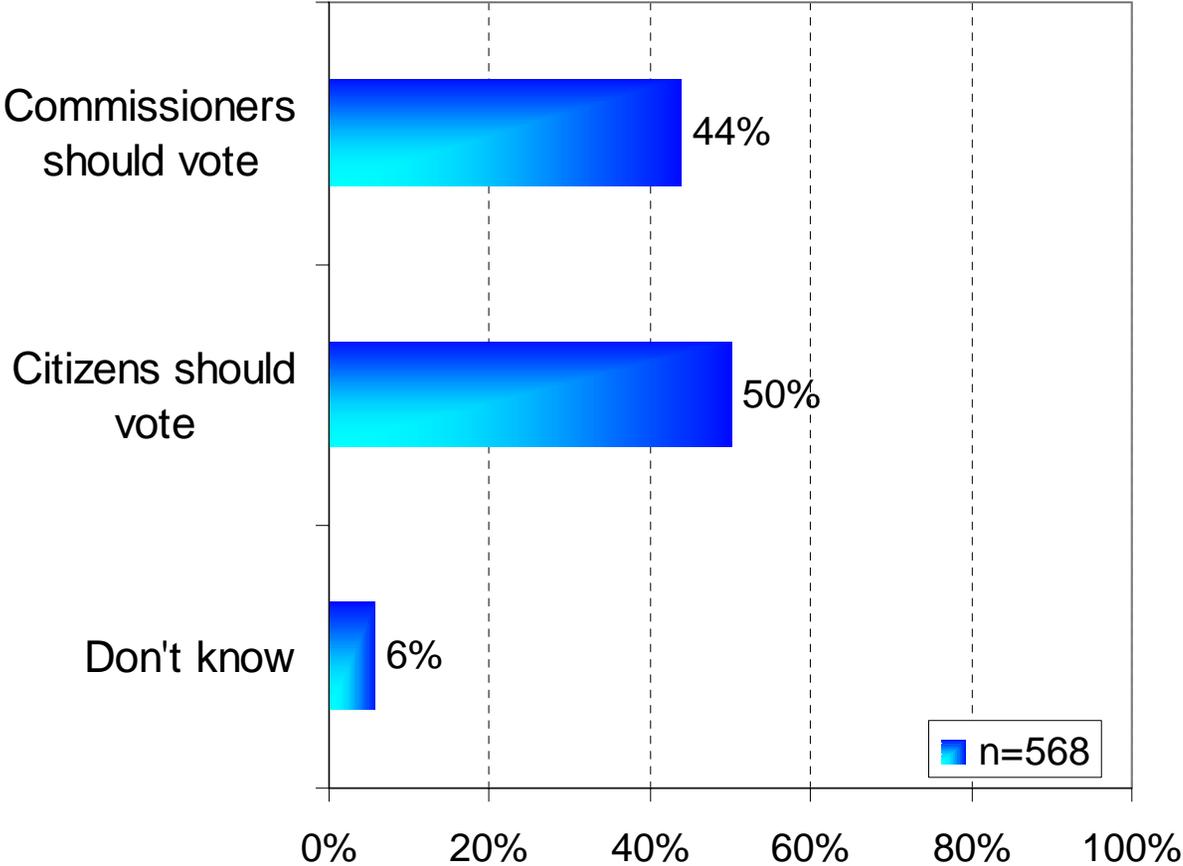
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\*Based on those registered voters that have not received their ballots or have not voted as of yet.

# Who should vote on Mass Transit System?\*

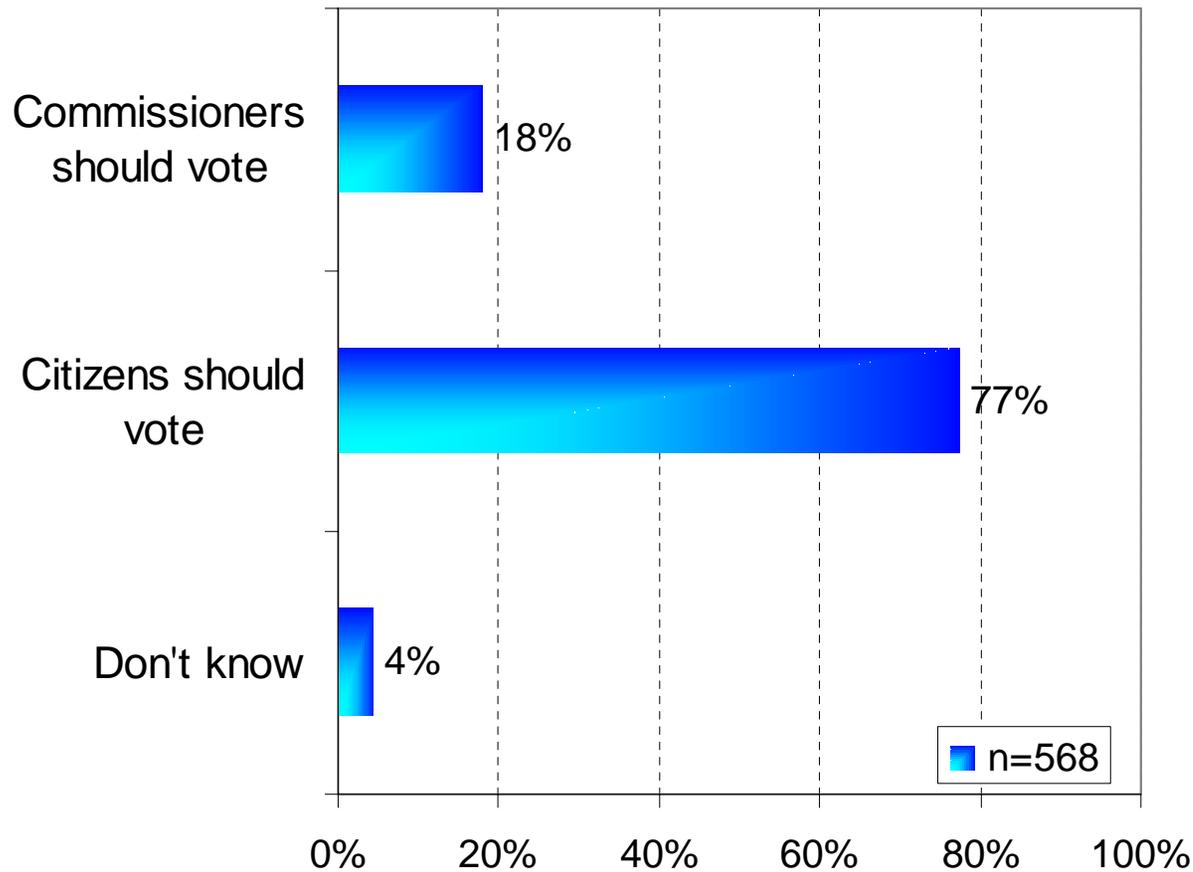
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\*Whether or not to replace TalTran with a private company that would build a more comprehensive mass transit system for this area

# Who should vote on local Sales Tax Increases?\*

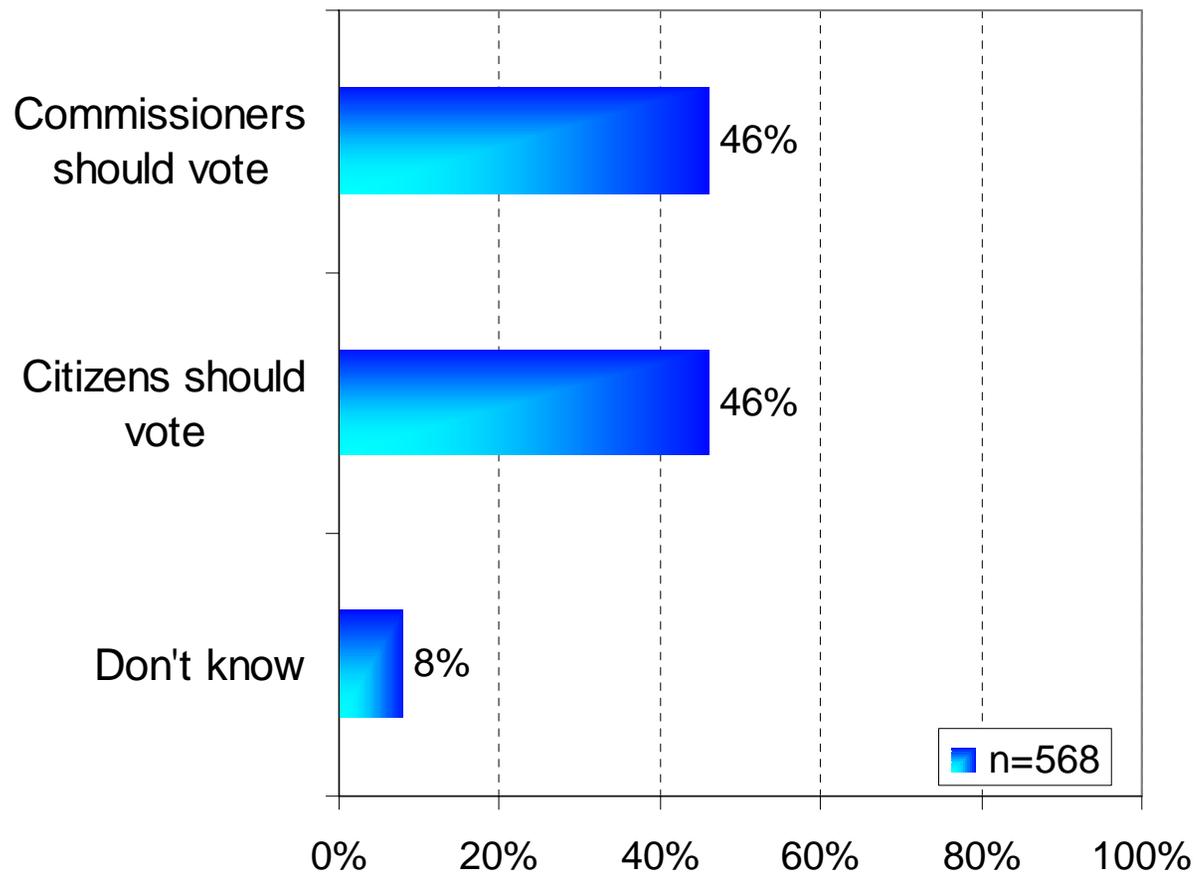
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\*Whether or not to increase local sales taxes to fund a range of transportation projects such as widening Capital Circle

# Who should vote on Inclusionary Housing?\*

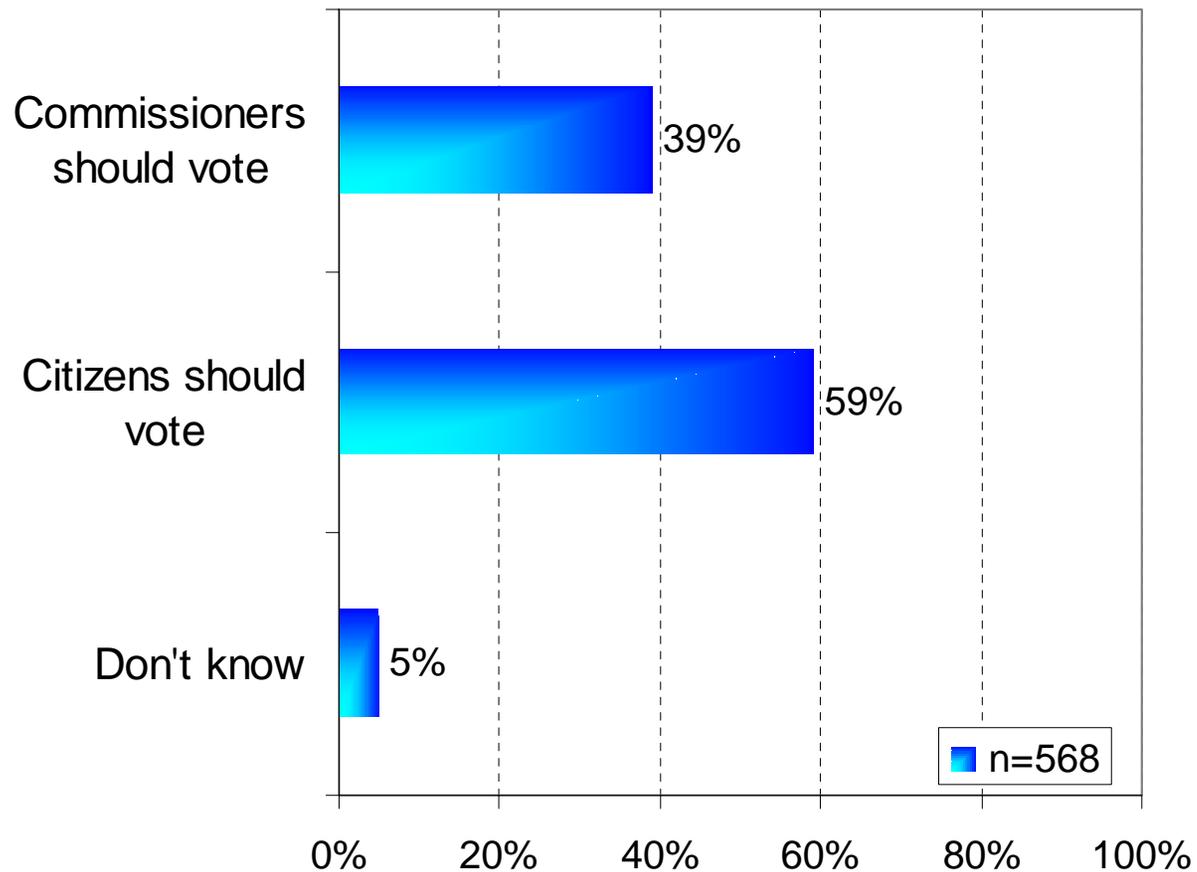
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\*Whether or not to force developers to include a certain percentage of low income housing in each housing development

# Who should vote on Energy Consortiums?\*

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\*Whether or not to participate in an energy consortium with other governments and private companies